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ABSTRACT

Ocean Hill-Brownsville was one of the three projects established by the New York City Board of Education to experiment with the reality of community participation. In time, much of the early optimism of community planners was dampened. The Board of Education's procrastination and its unwillingness to develop guidelines prior to the initiation of the projects helped to sow the seeds of discontent that eventually paved the way for the most volatile teacher strike in the history of New York City. In addition, the frustration and delay encountered by the community people set the stage for total rejection of the "system" by the communities involved. The events and developments in this complex may well serve as guidelines for future community organization, pointing the way for other communities seeking a way out of the educational decay which has crippled the public school system. (Author/DM)

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The Ocean Hill-Brownsville School Project: A Profile

by Carol A. Wielk

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This monograph is another in a series of occasional papers on urban issues to be prepared and published by the Institute for Community Studies. The views reflected in this monograph do not represent any policy of Queens College.

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The Institute publishes a monthly publication, COMMUNITY, reviewing current developments in urban studies, and occasional monographs, COMMUNITY ISSUES, analyzing topical urban issues.

At present, the Institute is the recipient of a Ford Foundation grant to provide technical services to demonstration school programs in community participation, while researching and evaluating those programs.

The Ocean Hill-Brownsville School Project: A Profile

by Carol A. Wielk

Partly in response to community pressure for more control over its schools and partly in an attempt to devise some solution or educational mechanism to meet the educational needs of the ghetto child, the Board of Education established demonstration projects in three economically deprived and educationally deficient areas in the city. As originally conceived in the Board of Education's April 19th policy statement on decentralization, the demonstration districts were to be small and were "to involve representatives of the community, parents, and staff more effectively in the conduct of school programs as well as in new approaches to teacher training and in curriculum development".[1] Effective community involvement was interpreted by the respective areas as the eventual delegation of *meaningful* control over the vital areas of school operation: personnel, budget, curriculum.

In time much of the early optimism of the community planners was dampened. The Board of Education's procrastination and its unwillingness or inability to develop guidelines *prior* to the initiation of the projects helped to sow the seeds for future discontent that eventually paved the way for the most volatile teacher strike in the history of New York City. In addition, the frustration and delay encountered by the community people in their dealings with the central body, especially during the electoral and quasi-operational phases of their projects' existence, set the stage for the total rejection of the "system" by the communities involved.[2]

Ocean Hill-Brownsville was one of the three projects established to experiment with the reality of community participation. The events and developments in this complex may well serve as a manual for future community organization, pointing the way for other communities seeking a way out of the educational decay which has crippled the public school system.

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[1] Board of Education, City of New York, "Decentralization: Statement of Policy," April 19, 1967.

[2] Much of the early frustrations and bureaucratic mismanagement of the demonstration projects are documented in a report submitted to the Board of Education by the Niemeyer Committee on July 30, 1968. See "An Evaluative Study of the Process of School Decentralization in New York City;" Final Report of the Advisory and Evaluation Committee on Decentralization of the Board of Education, July 30, 1968. Hereafter cited as the *Niemeyer Report.*

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The Nature of the Community

To many observers the physical environment which is Ocean Hill-Brownsville represents a "no man's land." Except for a few community organizations such as Project Method, Youth-in-Action, and a politically oriented council, the area is denuded of such service organizations offering legal, medical, employment, recreational, social service and other resource information. To obtain any of these or other services, residents must travel outside of community boundaries.

Ocean Hill-Brownsville is located in a poverty area in Brooklyn. According to the 1960 U.S. Census, the medium family income ranged from $3,000 to $5,100, with many families (1/3 to 2/3) falling below the $4,000 level. Male unemployment is high, as is the percentage of serious crimes committed in the area. The figures of the Department of Social Services indicate that 31% of the community population receives welfare grants. Much of the housing is deteriorated and the level of education of the adult population is somewhat lower than that for the rest of the city. Negroes comprised 73% of the population with Puerto Ricans constituting 24% and other, 2.9%.

The student achievement level is low, with the children in the complex schools reading at least two years below city grade level. The Unit Administrator of the Ocean Hill complex, Mr. Rhody McCoy, states that academic retardation of the student population is 58%; that is 6,000 pupils in the district are three or more years behind in basic subject skills.[8] Estimates indicating the academic success of Ocean Hill-Brownsville students within the last four years show that the high school attrition rate exceeds 70% with less than 1% of those graduating from high school receiving an academic diploma.

All of the schools in the complex are designated as "special service". That means that they are eligible for various remedial and compensatory educational programs offered by the city system. In this respect the per pupil operating cost for each school is higher than the city average ranging from just under $600 to somewhat over $900.

Nevertheless, low reading scores, high dropout rates and a mounting unemployment among the community youth provided the impetus for community organization along educational lines. Parent discontent and dissatisfaction increased to the point where operational modes and alternatives began to be formulated.

The Plan and the Election

One of the immediate causes for parent disenchantment with the local educational system grew out of a lack of representation on the local school board. (There was also much community hostility directed against a principal and some teachers. The principal was said to be an alcoholic.) In redistricting the boundaries for District 17, the Board of Education had created a situation whereby Ocean Hill-Brownsville had no voice on

[8] Rhody A. McCoy, "The Formation of a Community Controlled School District," unpublished paper prepared for the Conference on the Community School, the Brookings Institution, Washington, D.C., December, 1968, p. 1.

the local body. In response, the community formed an independent local school board in the fall of 1966. This board moved quickly to establish its voice in the selection of school personnel for a new school planned for the area, namely I.S. 55. As discussions progressed, it was decided that there were several vital areas in which the community had to be given a direct voice: the selection of a principal, selection of teachers, development of curriculum, and the use of nonprofessional neighborhood personnel in the school. A proposal was submitted to the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Bernard Donovan, and the Board of Education. There is no evidence that a response was received.

A steering committee, composed of parents and teachers of J.H.S. 178, was set up in the summer of 1967 to plan for the opening of the new school.[4]

At this time it was suggested that since J.H.S. 271, I.S. 55 and its feeder schools were located at the tip of District 17 and that the issues were those of lack of local board representation and improved education for the area—it might be more fruitful to formulate a proposal that would establish an experimental school unit for the district.

Also, at this time a group of parents from Harlem had been meeting with two education consultants from Yeshiva University to draw up a plan for an experimental school district for that area. Ocean Hill contacted these consultants for help in drafting a proposal for decentralization. The final plan submitted to the Board of Education in July, 1967 was the work of the parents, a professor from Brooklyn College and representatives of the United Federation of Teachers.

The plan called for the establishment of an experimental school district and an elected local Governing Board, which would be responsible for the operation of eight schools in the area, namely, J.H.S. 271, I.S. 55, P.S. 73, 87, 137, 144, 155, and 178. The Governing Board would consist of one parent and teacher representative from each school, five community representatives, two supervisory representatives—one each from the junior high school and common branch level, one ex-officio U.F.T. representative and one university representative.

Selection would be by secret ballot with parents from each school nominating and electing a parent representative; regular teacher and regular substitute teachers, nominating and electing teacher representatives; and supervisory personnel selecting their representative. The elected parent representatives would then select five community representatives from nominees proposed by community organizations; and the entire Governing Board, thus constituted, would select a university representative from among those people active in the pre-election effort.

As envisioned by community planners the Governing Board was to have the power "to select and appoint personnel, initiate and approve programs, request budget appropriations and make budget allocations".[5] It was also to appoint a Unit Administrator, directly responsible to the Governing Board, who would administer the entire educational program in the complex. It should be noted, especially in light of the recent

[4] J.H.S. 178 was to be converted to an elementary school; the new school, I.S. 55, was to be the intermediate school.

[5] "A Plan For An Experimental School District: Ocean Hill-Brownsville," July 29, 1967.

school upheaval, that the plan never promoted the idea of complete community control and/or independence. Rather, it stated that the local board would be "responsible and *answerable* to the New York City Superintendent of Schools and [to] the State Commissioner of Education in *all* matters pertaining to the schools of this district." (Italics added).[6] Furthermore, it made clear that the Board of Education's existing procedures for teacher evaluation would remain intact.

During this planning phase the community leaders contacted Ford Foundation for funding to finance the pre-election effort. (Ford Foundation had been working with the parents of I.S. 201 in Harlem since September, 1967 in order to "seek new educational alternatives.") Ford responded in July, 1967 with a grant of $44,000 which was channeled through Our Lady of Presentation Church.

Once in receipt of the Ford Grant, the community forces organized an election. Parents, teacher and community leaders were involved in the effort. A number of parents were paid as election consultants to canvass the neighborhood and inform the community of the pending election. At this point teachers were involved in the planning for decentralization as they had been in the drafting of the proposal. However, they later complained that they were ignored and that their suggestions went unheeded. In a statement issued in September, 1967, the teachers characterized the planning sessions as being ". . . extremely hostile and negative." They stated that constant reference was made to bigoted, incompetent and obstructive teachers who were attempting to sabotage the project. The community people, on the other hand, believed that the teachers were not committed to the concept of community control and utilized tactics to interfere with the establishment of an independent school board unit. To date, the differences and dissensions between the two groups has yet to be resolved.

The planning board faced numerous difficulties in preparing for the election, one of which was the initial refusal of the Board of Education to make available lists of parents with children in the several schools. Thus, the election consultants had to depend on door-to-door canvassing, sound trucks, flyers, radio announcements, newspaper ads, posters, etc., to publicize the coming election to potential voters.

On August 3rd and 4th, 1967, the election for the parent representatives to the Governing Board was held. Parents in each of the seven schools (I.S. 55 had not yet opened) cast their ballots for the candidates of that school. One thousand and fifty votes were registered for a total of 61 nominees. The candidate receiving a simple majority from each school became the elected parent representative to the Governing Board. The representatives, in turn, selected five community representatives from the ten proposed by the nominating community organizations; teacher personnel on the Governing Board were selected by the faculties of each school. The teacher representatives had served on the Planning Board prior to the election and continued in their representative capacity after the Governing Board was duly constituted. At that time eight teachers and one union delegate were represented on the local board.

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[6] *Ibid.*

In summary, the election of the Ocean Hill Governing Board was an unorthodox one, with less than a month ensuing between the announcement of the election and its culmination. There is no record of a community meeting for the purpose of introducing the candidates to the voters. This, perhaps, is due in part to the fact that most of the candidates had a history of involvement in either the parent associations or community groups and were therefore already known to the voters. In addition, no authorized agency such as the Honest Ballot Association or the American Arbitration Association supervised the electoral process. Rather, college students, many from Brooklyn College, and police cadets from the Neighborhood Youth Corps monitored the election. Nevertheless, most observers felt that the election was one in which a genuine effort was made to reach all the voters in the district and no evidence of coercion, either during the nominating process or at the time of the election, has been unearthed.[7]

The Teacher Representatives and the Governing Board

After the election relations between the parents and teachers deteriorated. The tensions between the two groups were the result of several factors. Initially, when the UFT had expressed interest in the establishment of the demonstration projects (and even had suggested Ocean Hill as a site), it had understood that the More Effective Schools Program (MES) would be instituted in several schools. When Dr. Donovan responded that an MES status for the demonstration areas would not be possible, the union began to have second thoughts on the feasibility of the experimental designs. The situation was exacerbated when the union made plans for a city-wide strike in September, 1967.

During the summer the union had pressed for an extension of the MES program in the city schools, in addition to demanding that teachers be given more authority over the disruptive child. The latter demand was interpreted by the Black and Puerto Rican communities as being directed against their children. The Ocean Hill community was no exception. Soon after the election of the Governing Board, the teacher representatives asked the Board for a show of support for the strike effort. On August 24, the Governing Board voted to keep the schools open, mainly because community sentiment appeared to favor such action.

The consequences of the Governing Board position were immediate. At the next meeting of the Board, the teacher representatives abstained from voting for five principals to fill vacancies in the several schools. Although the teachers stated that they were elected only to plan for the district and not to participate in the operational phase, it has generally been assumed that the UFT instructed the teachers not to involve themselves further in Governing Board actions.

The union clearly had reservations on the way the experiment was developing and the fourteen-day teacher strike served to widen the deepening chasm between the parent and teacher groups.

[7] *Niemeyer Report*, p. 77.

Eventually, the nine teacher representatives "resigned" from the board. (No formal resignations were ever submitted—the teachers just failed to attend subsequent meetings of the Governing Board.)

At this time there are four "provisional" teacher representatives on the Governing Board. (The faculties of all the schools were given an opportunity to select Governing Board representatives. However, only four schools chose to do so—and many of the teachers in these schools did not participate in the election.) They were selected in what some observers call a "rump" meeting. In addition, two supervisory personnel are members of the local board as is the college representative selected by the whole board. The present composition of the Governing Board is as follows:

Community Representatives:

Rev. C. Herbert Oliver, Chairman
Rev. John J. Powis
Mrs. Dolores Torres
Assemblyman Samuel D. Wright

Parent Representatives:

Mrs. Wilda Henderson, P.S. 73
Mrs. Agnes Hanson, P.S. 87
Mrs. Clara Marshall, P.S. 137, Vice-Chairman
Mrs. Blanche Pile, P.S. 144
Mrs. Lillian Davis, P.S. 155
Mrs. Hattie Bishop, I.S. 55
Mrs. Elaine Rooke, I.S. 271

Teacher Representatives:

Miss Colene Blenman, P.S. 87
Mrs. Alberta Loftin, P.S. 137
Mr. Ted Fletcher, I.S. 55
Mr. Ronald McFadden, I.S. 271

Supervisory Representatives:

Mr. Percy Jenkins, Secondary Level, I.S. 55
Mr. Luis Fuentes, Elementary Level, P.S. 155

College Representative:

Dr. Stephen Lockwood

Patterns of Leadership

A. The Policy Level—

It is important to note that the basic strength of the Ocean Hill leadership lies in its grassroots foundations. The parent and community representatives of the Governing Board have long been active in community and school affairs and have demonstrated an awareness of the problems confronting a ghetto school population.

The seven elected parent representatives are all mothers with children in the complex schools. (One of the parent representatives serves as Vice-Chairman of the Governing Board.) At the time of the election four were presidents or former presidents of their parent associations while the remaining three were active in their respective school organizations. Consequently, the ties between the individual schools and the elected governing body were established. In fact, the relationship between the two accounts in large part for the ability of the Governing Board to translate programs and objectives expeditiously to the several schools. New and experimental educational programs have generally been favorably received by the parent associations. This support has contributed substantially to the programs' successful launching. Furthermore, the individual Governing Board members serve as communication links between the policy-making body and the parents of the schools—exchanging information, receiving feedback on the feasibility of proposed projects and registering complaints and suggestions as to possible programs. In this respect the political process is one of reinforcement and dependence and points the way to increasing parent participation in the schools. Expanding the informed electorate should also increase the accountability and creditability of the local board and broaden its base of support. This, in turn, should serve to temper some of the charges of improper representation leveled by dissidents both inside and outside of the community. In fact, one of the major tests facing the Governing Board will be its ability to work with the contending forces in order to create a favorable climate for educational advancements.

The community representatives bring a variety of organizational strengths to the governing body. The Chairman of the Board is pastor of a local Presbyterian Church and had served for a short time as a member of the local school board in District 17. He also has a history of civil rights activity dating back to the Martin Luther King campaign in Birmingham, Alabama in the 1950's.

A white Catholic priest also sits on the Governing Board. He was a major force in spearheading the drive for community control and has had a long history of involvement in community activities. He served on the original steering committee and later on the Planning Board.

Other representatives include a Puerto Rican mother with strong ties to several community organizations. She was associated with Christians and Jews United for Social Action (CJUSA) and is now with Project Method. She was a member of the steering committee and Planning Board and has children attending the district schools.

A local political leader is also a member of the Governing Board. Although his recent activities have been interpreted by the rest of the Board as inimical to the survival of the complex, he is still active on the Board. A fifth community representative resigned last spring when he became a member of the Unit Administrator's staff. This was in accordance with the Governing Board by-laws which prohibits service in dual capacities.

The teacher, supervisory and college representatives round out the Governing Board and lend professional expertise to the local body. They provide the Board with valuable data pertaining to curriculum matters, teacher performance and other relevant pera-

gogical information. In effect, then, the Governing Board is structured along democratic lines. It brings together elements representative of the broader religious and social action-oriented community, the more immediate school-parent interests and finally the teaching staff.

A democratic structure alone, however, does not insure democratic ends. Thus, it will be the task of the Governing Board to give a fair hearing to all points of view. This might mean overcoming traditional resentments toward professionals or toward those who disagree with the present thrust of community control in the district. To the extent that the board can provide a framework for dissident expression will be the degree to which the goals of community participation will be met.

B. The Administrative Level —

One of the first acts of the newly elected Governing Board was the selection of a Unit Administrator. Several candidates were put forth, one of whom was Rhody A. McCoy, an educator with more than twenty years of experience in the New York City public school system. McCoy had served as summer coordinator during the planning phase. He was appointed administrator by a majority vote.

McCoy's basic administrative style has been to listen. His office is open to anyone —parent, teacher, community person—who wishes to discuss a problem or a proposal. He has also established contacts city-wide with persons and groups identified with or having access to the political or educational establishment.

His political acumen and understanding of the sub-culture of a ghetto neighborhood has contributed to the survival of the complex. Although he still has not "unified" the community in terms of dealing with the various individual desires of the leaders or potential leaders, he has nevertheless provided the stability which has maintained the complex as a viable unit.

McCoy's first task as Unit Administrator was to develop a staff capable of meeting the challenges presented by an experimental unit. He decided that the usual organization for a district office did not serve his personal or professional demands and set about to structure a different type of operation. After many meetings with the Superintendent of Schools and his staff, McCoy was finally given a lump sum dollar allotment to establish positions on his staff. He was told that he could create positions to his specifications, but must remain within the budgetary allocation.

McCoy's stated objective was to create titles befitting his intention to bring in "decision makers." As such, he established posts of Assistant Administrative Director and Supervisor of Libraries (instead of library coordinator). The former outrank the principals (which is normally the highest administrative post on a district superintendent's staff) and are therefore given the organizational status and decision-making authority deemed necessary by the Unit Administrator.

Other members of the district office staff include the Business Manager, Early Childhood Supervisor, Guidance Counselor, etc. While each of these positions will more or less find their counterpart in most other district offices, it is interesting to note that the stress on community involvement and participation has given a different tone and emphasis to the entire staff operation.

The staff selected for the district office reflects a wide range of educational and professional backgrounds. They include:

William D. Green, Assistant Administrative Director—Administration . . . former California resident . . . B.A., M.A., University of California, Berkeley, California . . . presently working on a Ph.D degree . . . former curriculum specialist with the Joint Council on Economic Education . . . curriculum consultant to the California State Dpeartment of Education, the Oakland Public Schools, Calif. and the University of California . . . teacher of English for fifteen years in California schools . . . has authored several publications dealing with educational matters.

Edwardo Braithwaithe, Assistant Administrative Director—Curriculum . . . B.A., Brooklyn College, M.A. in Language and Literature, Columbia University . . . teacher for twenty-five years in the Fine Art Studios . . . speaks fluent Spanish, French, Italian, Portuguese and medieval and classical Latin.

Thomas Johnson, District Administrative Officer . . . B.A. in political science, North Carolina College . . . three certificates in personnel administration from the Armed Forces Training Schools . . . former Senior Resource Consultant, Bureau of Resource and Legal Services, Department of Social Services . . . private investigator for three years . . . twelve years experience in personnel administration.

Edward Clooney, Guidance Coordinator . . . B.A., St. John's University, M.A. in guidance, Brooklyn College . . . former Guidance Counselor for nine years in Queens . . . nine years experience as a teacher in the New York City school system.

Harriet Brown, Library Supervisor . . . B.A, Hunter College, M.A. in Library Science, Columbia University . . . former Title I Coordinator for an after school library program and a special pilot school public library project . . . ten years experience as a district librarian in "Inner City Harlem" and Library Supervisor assigned to the Board of Education in charge of the elementary division for Bureau of Libraries . . . ten years of teaching in the New York City school system . . . ten years experience as a New York City public librarian.

Keith E. Baird Director, Afro-American and Latin American Studies Department . . . born in Barbados, West Indies . . . B.S., Columbia University . . . working on a Ph.D., Columbia University . . . Courses on Education, Ki-Swahili and Russian from Hunter College, New York University and the Board of Education . . . former Director of African and Afro-American History and Culture Center, Board of Education . . . Consultant on African History, HARYOU-ACT . . . thirteen years as a teacher of foreign languages in Brooklyn schools . . . Contributing editor, "Freedomways Magazine" . . . has authored poetry and material relating to the African and West Indian experience.

Walter Lynch, Director, Community Liaison Program for the Ocean Hill-Brownsville School District . . . Director, Coleman Community Center, I.S. 271 . . . long active in community affairs . . . organized the Ocean Hill Community Council which provided the thrust for community organization . . . worked with the

People's Board of Education . . . was a member of the original Steering Committee and Planning Board . . . former community representative on the Ocean Hill Governing Board.

Eva Kerr, Program Director, "At Home Reading Program," . . . B.A., Antioch College, M.A. in education, New York University . . . former supervisor of an adult vocational training program of the Manpower Development Training Program, Board of Education, and a high school equivalency program at the Police Cadet Project at Manpower . . . teacher of basic adult education . . . basic educational instructor, JOIN.

Julia Washington, Early Childhood Supervisor . . . B.A., Brooklyn College, working on an M.A. in education, Brooklyn College . . . six years as an elementary school teacher in Ocean Hill . . . active in summer day camps, Headstart program, Boy Scouts.

Eva McEachern, Supervisor, Individualized Reading Program . . . B.A., Fayetteville State College, North Carolina . . . former teacher in Florida for four years.

The selection of principals (all of the district's principals have the necessary state certification required for this position; they do not, however, meet the additional requirements imposed by the New York City Board of Examiners) for the eight schools in the district is also indicative of the Governing Board's and Unit Administrator's desire to experiment, while at the same time keeping in mind the political realities of the community. Ocean Hill was the first district in New York City to select a Puerto Rican and a Chinese principal. In addition, four Blacks, a Jew[8] and an Italian give ethnic diversity to the field staff. Each of the principals has demonstrated in his own way a capacity to cope with the day-to-day crises of the district, while at the same time continuing towards the educational goals of the complex. The Puerto Rican principal was responsible for instituting and staffing a bi-lingual program in his school, one of the first and most comprehensive of its nature in the city school system. The teamwork and *esprit de corp* exhibited by the principals has impressed many educators visiting the district.

The principals and the Unit Administrator hold frequent meetings where policy and administrative matters are discussed. In this manner the principals are given an opportunity to suggest courses of action, a procedure which illustrates the different administrative styles peculiar to each. The pragmatic, idealistic, traditional, iconoclastic and innovative proclivities are present in varying degrees in the group as a whole. Although differences in approach are evident, there is a firm commitment to the concept of community participation. The principals agree that professional accountability to the community is one of the most important elements in their job as pedagogical leaders in a community controlled district.

Much has been written about the teaching staff recruited by the Unit Administrator and the Governing Board. Generally it is concluded that a more dedicated and enthusi-

[8] This principal has since resigned from his post. An assistant principal from one of the Ocean Hill schools has been selected as the new principal.

astic group of school people do not exist anywhere in the system.[9] Many staff meetings called after school hours bring out an overwhelming majority of the teachers, many of whom have after school academic and personal obligations to fulfill.

The type of teacher attracted to the Ocean Hill experiment has generally been the liberal arts graduate with idealistic perceptions about the world in which he lives. Many teachers have attained graduate degrees while others have attended law and medical schools. The University of Paris and the London School of Economics are among the prestigious foreign universities from which Ocean Hill teachers have come. American institutions such as Columbia, Brandeis, St. John's, Cornell, Hofstra, City and New York Universities have trained other Ocean Hill staff. In addition, particularly in P.S. 178, there are teachers whose "alumni" include experience in Vista and the Peace Corps.

Although the staff in large part is young and inexperienced, many programs are under way to develop and capitalize on the youthful vigor and receptiveness—among them sensitivity training, group workshops and individual and informal sessions with the teacher trainers and principals. The lack of experience is further complicated by the many new and experimental programs being implemented in the district. Most of the more traditional teaching techniques are being discarded for more radical and programmed curricula methods. Thus, all such programs involve intensive teacher training before their formal inception.

The influx of an inexperienced, albeit enthusiastic, teaching staff, however, has presented the district with its most serious challenge. Teacher training and orientation programs have yet to show substantial improvements in terms of the individual classroom situation. There is need to either accelerate the pace of the present programs or devise new methods to cope with the problem.

Although the teaching staff has been receptive to curriculum changes, and to some extent has expressed a desire to experiment in a completely unstructured classroom environment, it is interesting to note that some parents have been more conservative in their reaction to experimentation. The parents have been accepting of the traditional teaching approaches and a program of community education is necessary to orient the parents to the new teaching methods. The Unit Administrator and Governing Board have already addressed themselves to this problem and it will be the responsibility of these leaders to work out transitional procedures acceptable to both groups.

Major Curriculum Changes

The emphasis on quality education especially in light of the failure of past compensatory programs has led the district to seek out new and experimental educational

[9] See "Teachers Who Give a Damn," *Time*, October 4, 1968; "With Love . . .", *Newsweek*, October 7, 1968, p. 76; Pat Reed, "Ocean Hill: A 'Good Thing' Soured by Politics, Strikes," *Education News*, October 21, 1968; "John Lindsay's Ten Plagues," *Time*, November 1, 1968, p. 22; ;"The Mason-Dixon Line Moves to New York," *I.F. Stone's Weekly*, November 4, 1968, pp. 2-3; Fred Ferretti, "Who's to Blame in the School Strike," *New York Magazine*, November 18, 1968, p. 31.

programs. Although some educators might doubt the radicalism of these programs when compared with such concepts as the "school without walls," they are nevertheless innovative to the extent that they offer positive alternatives to the basically traditional programs predominating in the New York City school system.

The bi-lingual program in P.S. 155 is an attempt to reach Spanish-speaking children in their native language during the early phases of schooling. The basic assumption underlying the program is that children first need the security offered by a familiar environment in order for the learning process to be adequately instilled. Ultimately, the purpose is to produce individuals able to communicate effectively in both languages. Key words and concepts in English are gradually introduced and the gulf between the two languages is bridged. An additional benefit of this program is that parents can communicate with their child's teacher in their native tongue—thereby increasing the overall effectiveness of the experiment.[10]

Project Read, a programmed reading curricula, utilizing structured materials, is being implemented in all the schools with the help of the Behavioral Research Laboratories of Palo Alto, California. This organization is also assisting in the establishment of Project Learn in P.S. 144, which involves the complete restructuring of the school day in "an individualized, nongraded, continuous performance program."[11]

The Bereiter-Engelmann method in P.S. 137 is more traditionally oriented and its emphasis is on an arduous and exacting school curriculum.[12]

Other programs include the establishment of a Montesorri class, a creative writing class (I.S. 55) which seeks creative expression first and then moves to grammatical correctness, and Project Giant Step which will seek to accelerate the positive behavioral qualities of problem youngsters. The teaching of mathematics by means of manipulative materials on which to build a learning base for future mathematical concepts is also in the planning stage. Known as the Madison Mathematics Project, it seeks to keep abreast of the latest ideas and innovations in the teaching of mathematics both in the United States and abroad.

An Afro-American and Latin American Cultural Center has been established under the leadership of Keith Baird. The thrust of the center will be the enrichment of curriculum through the Afro-American experience while at the same time providing much needed information to teachers and community people on the nature of the black man's past. Latin American culture will also be introduced to capitalize on the Puerto Rican contribution to American culture.

An "At Home Reading Program" is soon to be launched. Its intent is to reinforce the learning process in the home. Parents, on a volunteer basis, will work with children at home for a fixed period each day. Community workers will visit the homes to

[10] See *community*, published by the Institute, for additional information on this program, January, 1969.
[11] Behavioral Research Laboratories, *Project Learn:* A Proposal to the Ocean Hill-Brownsville Public School District, Palo Alto, California, no date.
[12] See *op cit.*, December 1, 1968 for a description of this program.

ascertain the progress being made and to detail the next week's work sessions. It should be noted that this program, as well as the others mentioned, depends on and utilizes the abilities of paraprofessionals and community workers. Community involvement is a basic assumption underlying all new educational prescriptions.

Finally, the community liaison program, supervised by Walter Lynch, is directed at channeling the energies of the new community spirit toward meaningful educational objectives. It seeks to keep parents informed of educational achievements and solicits their support and criticism of proposed projects. An important aspect of the program is community education. It hopes to assist community people in understanding the role of the Governing Board and the professional staff and the way each functions in the new educational environment. In addition, the parents associations are experiencing a new directional focus—no longer will they function as hostesses of cake sales and the like, but will be organized to play a significant role in the total educational process.

The sixteen community liaison workers, in addition to other activities, work with problem youngsters. They handle referrals from attendance and guidance officers, visiting the childrens' homes to interpret to the parents, in lay terms, the wishes of the professionals, and advising the parents on how best to deal with a situation. Basically, the total community program is an attempt to achieve what community control is all about—that is, the deep and continued involvement of the school parents in the educational progress of their children.

Significant Events In the Last Year

One can trace the events leading up to the present controversy over community control back to May, 1968 when the Ocean Hill Governing Board attempted to transfer nineteen professionals out of the district. Earlier, the district had experienced frustration in dealing with some of the professional staff. The Unit Administrator had attempted to transfer personnel *within* the district which, according to his information, was within his authority. However, the move failed when the teachers refused to comply.

It must be kept in mind that at this time the New York State Legislature was debating various decentralization measures. As the Niemeyer Committee notes:

> "Under normal circumstances the Demonstration Project might have been able to accomplish the transfer of 'unsatisfactory' personnel informally, bu[illegible]er struggle was being waged in the New York State Legislature over a ge[illegible] posal to decentralize the entire school system. . . . The project becam[illegible] glass, and any likelihood of working out informal arrangements in such [illegible] area as professional performance and transfer became most difficult."[13]

In any event, the Superintendent of Schools, Dr. Bernard Donovan, reje[illegible] community's request for transfers and ordered the reinstatement of the teachers. The local board remained adamant and the union demanded written charges. As the Niemeyer Committee points out the demand for written proof changed the nature of the request

[13] *Niemeyer Report,* p. 95.

from one of transfer to dismissal.[14] (As the system is presently structured, charges are not required for transfer cases).

The district board finally succumbed to the pressure from the Board of Education and the union and produced written charges. However, it refused to reinstate the teachers pending official determination of the validity of the charges. The union reciprocated by calling a district-wide strike for the last six weeks of the term, leaving the schools denuded of professional faculty and creating hardships for the graduating classes.

The school term ended in a stalemate. In all, the children of Ocean Hill lost fifty-two school days. These include the April 10th and 11th parent boycott to support the community's call for meaningful control, the alternating teacher and parent boycotts over the transfer controversy, and the fourteen day teacher strike at the beginning of the year.

After attempts by the Board of Education to obtain consent from the opposing factions for compulsory arbitration and/or mediation (utilizing the services of Theodore Kheel), the dispute was ultimately turned over to a Special Trial Examiner, Francis Rivers. It should be noted that the Ocean Hill Governing Board did not agree to the intervention by Rivers. They state that Donovan acted unilaterally in this matter.

On August 26, 1968, Rivers found that the charges were "insufficient in each case to sustain the necessary burden of proof." [15] He therefore recommended that the request for transfers be denied.

The main thrust of Rivers' decision was that the teachers charged were not shown to have performed any differently from teachers in other areas under similar circumstances. Charges were heard against only ten of the original nineteen. The six supervisory personnel received voluntary transfers; one teacher was reinstated and two others later requested and received transfers.

During the summer, while negotiations continued in an attempt to forestall a confrontation in September, the Governing Board interviewed and hired approximately 250 teachers to replace those who had walked out in the spring. On August 28, the Superintendent of Schools announced that 190 of the original 315 teachers in the district had requested and received transfers.

When school opened on September 9th, the UFT called a city-wide strike to protest the refusal of the Governing Board to reinstate the ten originally transferred teachers. Thereupon a series of events ensued with agreements arrived at (usually without the participation of Ocean Hill), and subsequently declared violated by Shanker. Three strikes were called, the Governing Board was suspended, reinstated and suspended again. Neutral observers were placed in the district schools, and the Unit Administrator, the principals, and four Governing Board teachers were suspended and eventually reinstated. Efforts to solve the dispute by Commissioner Allen and a special panel appointed by the Mayor were to no avail.

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[14] *Ibid.*, p. 94.

[15] Board of Education: City of New York, *Report and Recommendation of Francis E. Rivers, Esq.*, Special Trial Examiner (New York: August 26, 1968).

The settlement ending the third and final strike called for the establishment of a State Trusteeship to oversee the district operation and to assure the return of the union teachers to their classrooms. Herbert Johnson, Associate State Commissioner of Education, was appointed trustee.

The settlement temporarily removed three of the district principals pending the outcome of a Board of Education appeal on the legality of the position of Demonstration School Principal.[16] (The position has since been ruled legal. On January 15, 1969 the Court of Appeals ruled that the Board of Education had acted legally in bypassing Civil Service lists and establishing the post of Demonstration School Principal.) The concession by the Mayor, Board of Education and State Commissioner on this issue exacerbated an already tense community situation and paved the way for future difficulties for the State Trustee.

The Period of Trusteeship — *Phase I*

Calm was maintained at the Ocean Hill schools for a few days as the rest of the city opened its schools under normal conditions for the first time in the school year. The UFT teachers in Ocean Hill returned to their classrooms under heavy police guard.

Community spokesmen expressed humiliation and bitterness on the temporary removal of their three principals. This was very much in mind when Fred Nauman, one of the ten disputed teachers and the symbol of UFT power, became involved in an altercation with a student at I.S. 271.[17] The community demanded that Nauman be removed pending an investigation. McCoy, who had recently been reinstated by the State Trustee, reassigned Nauman to the district office. Johnson recinded the order and advised Nauman that he was entitled to remain at his teaching post. Later that day Johnson reversed his own order. He removed Nauman from the school and in what seemed to be an attempt to head off a confrontation reinstated Dorothy Hopkins, one of the suspended teachers sympathetic to the local board. However, Johnson's indecisiveness at a key point in the crisis gave rise to a new fervor of community indignation and rebelliousness. This feeling was given full vent when on December 2nd a group of community people entered I.S. 271 and attempted to obtain the reinstatement of the principal, William Harris. Throughout the day the school remained open while Johnson and the community spokesmen tried to find common ground. The culmination to a tumultuous situation came when students protesting the city-wide strike settlement descended upon 271. An accomodation could not be reached and Johnson, believing himself unable to function without community support, submitted his resignation to Commissioner Allen.

Phase II

Commissioner Allen appointed Dr. William Firman as the new trustee. I.S. 271 was temporarily closed and Firman in private conversations began talking about making

[16] The original court case was heard before Justice Rinaldi of the New York Supreme Court, who on March 2, 1968, ruled that the appointments were illegal. His decision was affirmed by the Appellate Division in November, 1968.

[17] J.H.S. 271 was converted to an intermediate school.

unilateral decisions if accommodation with the various elements in the community and on the staff could not be reached. He demanded that McCoy submit a written plan for the opening of 271, including the names of supervisory personnel to run the school. McCoy refused and insisted on his right as educational leader to run the district as he saw fit. When McCoy tried to reopen the school under his own authority, he was arrested and later removed from his post by the State Trustee. I.S. 271 remained closed until further notice. The rest of the district's schools became affected when the principals, and then the teachers walked out in protest over McCoy's ouster.

Phase III

In what can be interpreted as a desire to maintain the Ocean Hill district as a viable educational unit, Commissioner Allen replaced Dr. Firman with Dr. Wilbur Nordos and reinstated McCoy. Prior to this, meetings between McCoy and the state representatives had emphasized the need to return to educational priorities. Dr. Nordos pledged that he was interested mainly in an educational partnership. McCoy thereupon opened 271, temporarily installing himself at the helm. (Mr. William Harris, the principal of J.H.S. 271, has resumed his post pursuant to a decision on the Demonstration School Principal by the Court of Appeals. The two other affected principals have similarly been reinstated.)

On January 2nd, Leslie Campbell, one of the four Governing Board teachers accused of harrassing the UFT teachers, was reinstated by a state panel established to investigate the charges. (At present, the Israelson panel, set up as part of the citywide strike settlement, is examining the activities of Mr. Campbell.) The other three teachers had previously been cleared by the panel.

Fred Nauman, the disputed UFT teacher, refused to appear before the state committee and was assigned to the Board of Education pending a determination of his status by the Superintendent of Schools. And on March 7th, the Board of Education, acting on the recommendation of Commissioner Allen, voted to reinstate the Governing Board.

At this point, many problems remain. Staff coherance and cohesiveness with respect to the implementation of the new educational programs must be developed; and the whole area of the community's ability to function in non-crisis and respond to the educational demands made upon it must be dealt with. These demands include not only those of the community elements but those of the professional staff, upon whose shoulders the primary responsibility for quality education must fall.

The Future At Ocean Hill-Brownsville

It is significant that during the course of the city-wide strike, the Ocean Hill schools operated on a generally optimum basis. Without the intrusion of UFT personnel and police forces, Ocean Hill quietly set about the task of education. An educational atmosphere prevailed however, only as long as the external community remained at bay. With each new strike settlement, the police and outside elements—both UFT and community militants—returned in force; and the turmoil in the community began anew.

Education was disrupted by demonstrations, marches and walkouts by staff and students. It seemed that Ocean Hill could operate normally only if it remained isolated and disconnected (severed) from the events and power plays taking place in the rest of the city. It remains to be seen whether Ocean Hill can function as part of the structure and fabric of the total educational system, or whether its need to be isolated is essential to its success as an educational entity.

The conflict with the UFT and the entire educational establishment is only one of the unsympathetic forces that Ocean Hill must contend with. The actions taken by the New York State Legislature will certainly have relevance to the Ocean Hill situation. In addition, the community must ultimately deal with the various factions within the district which are seeking to mold a different concept of community control.

Assemblyman Samuel Wright, a member of the Board who had previously called for a new election, remains at odds with the present Governing Board. He has charged that the Governing Board election was not conducted properly and gave unfair advantage to persons active in the pre-election effort. He and his supporters have organized, and a new election will bring the contending political forces to the fore.

If the confrontation and strife have produced nothing else, it has made Ocean Hill-Brownsville a community. Once apathetic and politically powerless, Ocean Hill has emerged as a symbol of the black man's desire to control his own development. It has become the arena from which to attack the entire educational malaise which has gripped the public school system.

Beyond this, the conflict at Ocean Hill has made education a focus for parental and professional concern—a concern which recognizes no racial or economic barriers. It has legitimized the role of the community in school affairs; and participation, if not control, has become one of the measurements for evaluating standards of educational success. To this extent the forces of change have made their debut on the educational scene, and it would appear that only a substantive and meaningful restructuring of the total concept of public education will yield the necessary ingredients to prevent chaos.